

This Old House

39

SMART IDEAS
Reinvent your
laundry room
p. 78

*New season,
fresh
looks*

for **every
room**
in the
house

**8 CLEVER
TRICKS**
to make
a small
yard
feel
bigger
p. 84

Plus

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of amazing makeovers**

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44
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THE LOOK
FOR LESS



NEW SEASON, FRESH LOOKS →

idea file

- 27 before + after: kitchen**
Two cooks use DIY skills and bargain-hunting prowess to serve up their ideal cook's space
- 32 before + after: bath**
An oddly shaped space gets better the function, period style freshens and privacy
- 36 budget redo**
First-time homeowners turn a blank lot into a cozy living space
- 62 Photoshop redo**
A simple figurehead perch helps a porch turn on the cottage charm
- 70 Diner's delight**
A fun, gruff white house makeover replaces a Colonial Revival's neglected charm
- 76 read this before you remodel your laundry room**
Expert advice on everything to consider before you get started
- 86 stretching a small yard**
Use space in landscaping means to make your limited lot blossom
- 92 best old-house neighborhoods**
Learn about four of the 67 top spots that made our 2012 list
- TOH tv**
- 56 adding on above the garage**
Pro advice from the latest project house can help guide your addition decisions
- upgrades**
- 39 shopping**
Ceramic garden stools—from \$60!
- 35 get this look for less**
Cottage-style bedrooms
- 45 shop smarter**
Seamless steel sink

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{ April 2012 } contents



39 SHOPPING



on the cover



27, 32, 36, 41, 70, 72 New season fresh looks for every room in the house
25, 26, 35, 44 Offers gone wild
45 Ideas of amazing makeovers
87 Is your paint too old to use? 2 ways to tell

Contributors by THE EDITORS
Monthly 11/02/12/03/12



Turn wood rounds, a jewel post, a ceiling medallion, and a beveled mirror into a reflective landing spot. Tom Silva shows you how.



59
HOME CENTER PROJECT



65
WEEKEND REWIND

95
ASK THIS OLD HOUSE



17
HOME SOLUTIONS

49
PAINT BLOG

home solutions

- 17** Make art in the message board
20 when the world's solutions for
compost pile problems, you often
issues to wash out for and more

how-to projects

- 49** paint ideas
Rep in a second shade to bring
out the best in your basic color
- 51** landscaping
Our yard-to-go will put your
eyes on the green to a lush side
- 59** home center project
Use some simple materials to
build a mirror-topped accent table
- 65** weekend remodel
Create an enticing garden gate
with stock cedar lumber

ask this old house

- 95** Q + A: Get window-cleaning
to when you're on the go
stick out too far, these ways
to tell if paint is too old to use
get a noisy water heater to go
down, and more
- 98** step-by-step
Permeable pavement driveway
- 100** TOIT-tested
Variable-speed bit routers
- 102** Worm's tricks of the trade
Keep your tools from flying
off your meter saw

in every issue

- 6** reader mail
- 7** thisoldhouse.com
- 8** letter from This Old House
- 12** checklist Easy ways to
improve your home right now
- 103** directory
- 104** save this old house

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Digging myself into a hole. Again

"Are you sure you want to do this?" my wife asked me.
"We've got to do something," I replied, unraveling a
roll of contractor bags and thinking about what to do
at the pond.

This was late last summer, when Hurricane Irene was
threatening and my city's officials were saying the storm
surge would roll right up the river road, turn the corner, and
floodlight down our street. And because ours is a neighbor-
hood of rowhouses, with garden-level doors, water front
steps and windows right down to the ground, everyone
was worried it wouldn't just be our mortgages underwater.

Some of my neighbors had said bigger than entire, and
when I heard the sanitation department was going to collect
the bags after the storm, I had an idea. As you may know by
now, that's often where I run into trouble. Anyway, I had
no canvas sacks or sand, but I did have a rise of ground in
our small backyard, maybe a dozen feet in each direction,
that grew more weeds than grass and that we had wanted
to bring down 12 inches or so to the level of the street.
"It's the perfect excuse to start, and we won't have to pay
anything for the dirt," I said to my wife. "It's genius!"

"Yeah," she said, "that or the change in the basement
pressure is affecting your brain."

With the threat of the storm just blown away and a hint
in the air, I started to fill bags. She wanted to go into the house, and as she did, she
said, "I just hope you know how to finish what you start." You can probably guess
how that ends. I ran out of bags before I ran out of soil, and, six months on, my
excavation remains incomplete. Finishing what you start, it turns out, is a lot harder
when the threat of disaster preparations gives way to increased demands at work
and the needs of a newborn. "Weeds would have at least been gone," my wife
pointed out the other day, and I knew right then that there was only one way to finish
my landscaping project. Here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to smooth out the
bottom of the hole and be done with it and see if I can't put some soil back onto one
Yardwood isn't necessary, but, if you're so inclined, flowers would be appreciated.
Maybe seedlings instead of cut flowers. After all, they might take root, and I guess
make the backyard look good somehow.

Sam O'Sullivan
SCOTT O'SULLIVAN, EDITOR
scott@thisoldhouse.com



THREE THINGS I LEARNED FROM THIS ISSUE+

1. How marching ants can lead to
a fun backyard project. (p. 20)
2. How George Washington's
head can help you tell the road.
(p. 16)
3. How an old T-shirt and a new
plant can transform your walls. (p. 40)

PS: Not all landscape projects have to end the way mine did. Check out the
project featured in "Stretching a Small Yard," on page 34. Lots of precision, and
not one of them requires a tank.

TABLE 1
 COSTS OF A TRUCKING FIRM, 1994-1995

STYLING CHOICE AGENTS

NOISE RESPONSE IN
2003 HPI

HOW TO SAY IT
P. 100, L. 10

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{ April 2012 }

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 anxiety disorders.

Read the Patient Information that comes with LORAZEPAM before you start taking it, and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This article summarizes the most important information about LORAZEPAM and does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your condition or treatment.
 For more information, visit LORAZEPAM.com or call 1-877-336-6261

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 LORAZEPAM is a prescription medicine, called a light sedating medicine, for adults. LORAZEPAM is made of a drug that helps you relax and control things that bother you, such as anxiety and stress. It may also be used to help you sleep. It may also be used to help you relax and control things that bother you, such as anxiety and stress.

LORAZEPAM is used along with a low fat and low cholesterol diet to lower very high cholesterol levels. It may also be used to help you relax and control things that bother you, such as anxiety and stress.

LORAZEPAM may also be used to help you relax and control things that bother you, such as anxiety and stress. It may also be used to help you sleep. It may also be used to help you relax and control things that bother you, such as anxiety and stress.

Treatment with LORAZEPAM has not been shown to prevent heart attacks or strokes.

LORAZEPAM has been studied in children under the age of 18 years.

Who should NOT take LORAZEPAM?
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• are allergic to LORAZEPAM or any of its ingredients.

What should I tell my doctor before taking LORAZEPAM?
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• have had liver or kidney problems

• are taking or plan to take other medicines

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• Take LORAZEPAM exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose or stop taking LORAZEPAM without talking to your doctor.
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 • Your doctor should do blood tests to check your triglyceride and cholesterol levels while taking LORAZEPAM.
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LORAZEPAM may also cause some side effects, such as:

• changes in your sense of time

• changes in your sense of time

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home solutions

Edited by Jessica Dodd-Hickler

inside

10 HOUSES

MONEY-SAVER

HEALTHY HOME

MORE



Tin-tile chalkboard

Any family can benefit from a centrally located message center, but those who pursue do-it-yourself home projects will love this. For something with a little extra charm, coat a tin ceiling tile with chalkboard paint. The application is easy. Choose a tile with a large, unadorned center area, such as the 24-inch Art Deco design here, then rough up the metal with fine-grit sandpaper, prime it, and brush on the paint. To finish the board, hot-glue the tile onto a piece of plywood, then frame it. We used 1/4-by-3-inch hard-wood strips around the sides and top, and a piece of blackboard molding at the bottom for holding chalk, and painted them black. To see a detailed step-by-step of this project, visit doityourself.com/2012.

PHOTO: THE HOME DEPOT; STYLING: JESSICA DODD-HICKLER



Coins

There's more than one way to make your money work for you. Just check out these savvy around-the-house ideas for loose change.

1 Hang a cabinet door.

Before fastening hinges to a cabinet, ensure there's enough clearance along the bottom for the door to swing freely by resting it on a stick during installation.

2 Tighten a screw.

A dime is just the right width to drive a threaded screw making it a handy stand-in for a flathead screwdriver.



4

3 Temporarily fix a wobble.

Set a coin or two under the short leg of a wobbly table to keep it from rocking until you can come up with a more permanent fix.

5 Straighten drapes.

Instead of spending on store-bought drapey weights, tack some pennies inside the bottom hem of wayward curtains to encourage them to hang evenly.

6 Space tile.

When setting tile, place pennies on and between the corners of each piece for spacers that are easy to remove.

6 Make a doorknob.

For a weight that'll keep a door open, employ a few handfuls (or a large

jar) of pennies into a small canvas bag and tie it closed with colorful ribbon or twine. Total cost: under \$10.

7 Test tire treads.

Place a quarter upside down in one of the grooves. If it just touches George Washington's head, the tread's depth is only 1/16 inch and it's probably time for a new tire.



10

8 Pop a top.

Slip a quarter under the snap-on lid of plastic containers, such as those that hold epoxy patching compound, and drywall, to help pry them open.

3 Fluff carpet. Steam brooms made by Starline, then scrape the edge of a coin across the pile to revive it.

—GILLIAN BARTIS

9 Take a quick measurement.

Don't have a ruler on hand? A quarter's diameter is just under 1 inch, a penny's is exactly 1/2 inch.

what's your solution?

For a doorknob, consider it not just a coin, but a doorknob. Pennies, spare your effort. Coins of Hope. (www.coinsofhope.com)

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Cures for compost

Balance is the key to building a compost heap that produces rich, healthy fertilizer for your garden. From green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) ingredients get out of which the microorganisms turn into a stinky, slimy mess. To keep it on track, section for the best items that will not only help you to your pile of future plant food.



PROBLEM: It smells like rotten garbage or ammonia.

SOLUTION: It's too wet or has too much green material, such as vegetable scraps, fruit peels, and grass clippings. Mix in brown material, such as straw or newspaper, until the pile is as damp as a wrung-out sponge. If you're in for a big rain, shield the pile with a tarp.



PROBLEM: It's attracting flies.

SOLUTION: Make sure you're not adding any meat or dairy—these odors are irresistible to flies. Move kitchen waste to the mouse's feeder and surround it with straw.



PROBLEM: It's taking forever to decompose.

SOLUTION: Garden is a slow process. To speed it up, start a new pile on top of it. Add equal amounts of green and brown material and water until the pile is damp but not wet.



PROBLEM: Ants are swarming the pile.

SOLUTION: These insects remind that the compost is too dry. Dig a trench by the side of the pile with water and pouring it a good etc.—G.R.



Add a tree, save cash

"When we don't take care of the land, we have no life. The greatest resource of the Earth," said architect Frank Lloyd Wright. He was on a mission: "Aside from aesthetic benefits, trees can increase property values by 10 to 20 percent, improve air quality and, according to the National Arbor Day Foundation, slash air conditioning bills by as much as 35 percent. Since spring is the perfect time to plant, start now by planting first-growing deciduous trees, such as red maples or burk oak, in the yard, west, and/or in front of your house. They block the hot summer sun and encourage leaves fall off. Still, allow plenty of warming light into your home in winter. Most will take 10 years to see substantial benefits, you can start saving energy now by planting a small tree to shade your air conditioner." "Planting the right order will make it run efficiently," says Barry, "and save you even more money." —KATHY HANCOCK

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/ISTOCK; PHOTO: ANDREW HARRIS/ISTOCK

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Know what's behind your walls

Insulation has come a long way. These days you can stuff your walls with everything from recycled blue jeans to soy-based foam to keep things comfortable year-round. But if you live in an older house with insulation installed before you moved in, understanding what puts your walls is essential to keeping your family safe—especially if your spring-to-die list includes cleaning the attic or removing it. Here's what you need to know about three common old-house insulations.

Vermiculite

What it is: A lightweight, silvery mineral that resembles mica flakes.

How it works: Vermiculite absorbs water and is fire resistant, giving it myriad uses, from filling up garden soil to soundproofing floors. The mineral was popular during much of the 20th century as insulation, thanks in part to its easy application. It could simply be poured by the bagful between ceiling joists.

Possible hazards: Vermiculite isn't inherently harmful; you can still buy it at garden stores. But 70 percent of the vermiculite sold from 1919 through 1990 came from a mine in Libby, Montana, which shared the space with a deposit of asbestos. If your home was built before 1990 and has vermiculite insulation, you should assume it's contaminated with asbestos, which according to the EPA puts you at risk for lung diseases, including asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma.

Fiberglass

What it is: Don't mess with it. There's less risk in just living with the material than in trying to remove it and possibly releasing asbestos into the air you breathe. Rather, staining basins in your attic if accessing them disturbs the vermiculite. And if multiple renovations require cutting a hole in the ceiling, call a contractor certified to deal with asbestos.

Mineral wool

What it is: Finally your glass fibers create a lethal material that can be rolled as batting, it can also be sprayed into walls as loose fill. It was one of the most popular types of insulation.

How it works: Fiberglass



works as a barrier by trapping air inside pockets of fluff, that's why it lives as effectiveness when compressed by the weight of beams or other heavy items. **Possible hazards:** In 2001, the World Health Organization removed fiberglass insulation from its list of possible carcinogens. However, if you're handling it, you need proper protection, an appropriate amount of glass can break loose and irritate your skin and throat, says Allen Rutley, president of the Healthy Home Institute.

If you have it: Avoid disturbing the material. If you have to work with it—to fill up batting that's been flattened, for example—wear gloves, goggles, a dust mask, and a loose-fitting long sleeve shirt. Make sure to clean up thoroughly afterward.

Mineral wool

What it is: Popular before World War II, mineral wool came in two main forms: rock wool, which is made by spinning molten rocks into masses of tiny interwoven fibers similar to cotton wool, and slag wool, which is made from the by-product, or slag, that flows on the surface of molten metal.

How it works: Formed into blankets, batts, or boards, mineral wool fibers block both sound and temperature exchange through walls. It can also be found as loose-fill insulation.

Possible hazards: Like fiberglass, mineral wool can cause itching on contact and its dust may temporarily irritate your throat.

If you have it: Follow the same precautions as you would when dealing with fiberglass.

—NATALIE GUNTERCH MACHINGE

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REAL CEDAR



before+after:
kitchen

High style on a low budget

DIY determination—and a patient search for bargains—gives two cooks the low-cost, warm-looking work space they craved. By DEBORAH SALDNER • Photos by BRIAN COMBAC



There's a glow and feel to it, each with its own magic. Dick VanNieuwland, who likes to build as well as brew, believes it's best to take one's time. He spent "about a year" renovating his kitchen, in the 1939 cottage he and Karin Goody share in Wilmington, North Carolina—and did it with Karin working alongside him, from demolition and design to painting and tiling. While working to a \$12,000 budget, they didn't stint on tools and materials, managing to acquire, for example, their very own cement vibrator and mixer—helpful in making concrete countertops—and a masonry press, which Dick used to add joints, veneer to the cabinet fronts. They upgraded the fridge with black appliances, then splurged on a gas range and a butcher-block island top. Dick, who builds move-ins for a living, even made the cabinet pulls. Today, Karin is hard put to say which pleased her most: the polished concrete that replaced the "ugly old tile" or the new layout, which increased work space and opened the room to the sunroom. "That changed not just the kitchen," she says. "The whole house now works better."



[Before]

during the range gave up its spot to the right of the sink to make way for an opening to the sunroom. **AFTER** Me too! With the same countertops, cabinets made with earthy woods, and a butcher block topped island steps up a notch in function.

before+after: kitchen

4 Reeded-glass cabinet fronts open shelves and to the eating table the built-in open shelving. The homeowners found the tile—along with the laurel and cork flooring—on eBay.

4 The DIY tinted concrete countertops' compatibility of gravel, beer, toothpaste, and even for washing

▲ The DIY tinted concrete countertops contain bits of gravel for a beachy look.



4 The stove above new lined with honeycomb marble tile sits between a boxed-out chimney and the relocated fridge. The hoodiness vents the hood through the attic of the five-story house. Range: Oil Heat. Choppers: Doubletap counter. Chang: Calacatta. Dishwasher:

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- after

The 170 square-foot space, cut off from an unheated sunroom, consigned cooking and cleanups to one unimposed corner.



The same-size space, speeded up to the new heat of sunroom-dining area: two separate working/sitting/dining zones, each with ample storage and work space.

I Turned an interior window into an opening to the sunroom now heated and cooled via ducted air-conditioning.

2. Closed up an opening
to create more
usable wall and
floor space and
making a new
separate room
from the storage area.



I moved the passageway to the nursery into the kitchen, and installed pantry shelves where the old opening had been.

5. Relocated the **tail fin** and the **gills** to the new swimming sleeve.



† The cabinet pulls started out as shabby little items found online. Whenever Click made the cabinet doors and drawer fronts with cleches, or black-powdered, radiatae waves.



homework tip

FACE & NETWORKS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

"To give the countertops a glass-smooth surface, I polished them with a pneumatic grinder fitted with a diamond pad, then used a specialty sealer."



† A magnetic knife
that hangs on the drywall
shimmy. It's used to move the
piece of shims.

• An elevated wood block to the right of the wings keeps the counterwing fully extended as the insect flies off.



Squared off for a smarter layout

An awkward bath open to a sitting area doubled its function with fewer windows, more walls, and perfect-fit finishes by ALLEGRA MUSIELLO • Photographs by STACY KRAMFORD

In the eternal quest for an additional bath, owners of older homes have been known to do strange things. Consider the arrangement that greeted Candace Azanawi and Stephen Manza when they bought their 1914 house in Toronto, Ontario. Previous owners had carved an odd, 350-square-foot L-shaped bath with a carpeted sitting area on the second floor. With an exterior window onto the hall and a French door, "privacy was what the bath lacked most," says the couple's designer, Jane Lockhart. The whirlpool tub was also tough for holding two young kids, the shower was tiny, and the double vanity held pipes, not storage. "Something had to give," recalls Stephen, and it did. First, Lockhart moved a wall, cutting the L into two rectangles, one for the soaking and bath and the other a nursery, both entered from the hall. She also walled off a window so kids pipes and held a single vanity flanked with ceiling-height storage cabinets. The tub, toilet, and shower moved to better spots, and period-style finishes make the room "finally feel like it belongs to the house," says Stephen. Adds Azanawi, "I now adore bath time—both mine and my daughters'."



before: The sprawling 350-square-foot L-shaped bath plus sitting area looked functional—and privacy. AFTER: A wall went up to set off a 50-square-foot bath whirlpool-inspired finishes. GARNETT LUTER



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A stylish dining room for \$661

A couple tackle their first redo, turning a blank box into an inviting space to use and enjoy. BY ANDREA BARNES



Before

Before: Plain walls and a bulb chandelier made the room look generic at best. New paint, frame wallpapering, a few old house charms, white wood and wicker furnishings keep the room looking warm and fresh.

the project tally

Installed chair rail and wall frames (orange and the lower half of the walls) white to create a warm, cozy look \$100

Catered in twigs, cards for apartment with clean lines \$0

Spruced up avoid table with mahogany slats \$5

Bought four shapely wicker chairs with white cushions \$300

Added texture and color with a natural spin rug \$65

Finished the walls with framed photos and put a small table in one corner \$55

Stenciled two covered chairs to make four carbon pencils, adding tactile elements to the paint so it would be washable. Using them from kids and clips \$100

total **\$661**



Live in a rental long enough and you'll be itching to DIY when you finally buy. Once Amy and Chad Whelan purchased their 1951 ranch house, in Durham, North Carolina, years of builder-grade finishes made them anxious to take a backseat and put their own best dining room to bed. Making it a comfy, cozy gathering spot. The wood floors were in good condition, so they worked on the walls, installing chair rail and creating wall frames out of panel molding that was placed in place, secured with nails, and painted white. To replace the chandelier and clip-on shades, they chose a simple drum pendant. Below it, they purchased Amy's old dining table, which they'd refinished with dark stain. A set of wicker chairs added more warmth, natural texture to the room, and a natural-yet-stylish rug. The stars of the room, though, are those flat canvases; friends are amazed to learn that Amy turned a pair of canvas drop cloths into two pairs of panels with just a stencil and navy craft paint mixed with acrylic medium. From breakfast to bell peepers, the room now gets lots of use. "It's casual and relaxed, but still traditional—just like us," says Amy. ■



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shopping

Ceramic garden stools—from \$66!

Whether nestled up to a garden bench or the living room sofa, these sculptural seats are ultraversté, indoors and out. *By DANIELLE MARTENS • Photographs by JESSIE CHEN*

It's a spare seat, it's a side table, it's a plant stand—a ceramic garden stool can serve a multitude of purposes around the house. The typical stool shape is a time-honored Chinese form, used for over a thousand years as a casual garden perch. By the 19th century, they were showing up at British conservatories, and English potteries started turning out designs with brighter colors and more openwork. Today these drum-shaped stools are enjoying a comeback and run the gamut from traditional Chinese models to more contemporary interpretations. Outdoors, they can provide an all-weather bit of color and pattern on a patio or porch. Inside, they can hold a book beside the bathtub, a coffee mug next to your front chair, or serve as a spot to sit at party time—as decorative as a throw pillow but a lot more useful.

1
ripped-in and fluted
BALLARD DESIGN
37 1/2" W x 17 1/2" H

This graceful stool shows its handiwork of slip-cast ceramic with a blue glaze. \$109, ballarddesign.com

2
cross-cultural
J.C. PENNEY
33 1/2" W x 21 1/2" H

A gray-glaze combination of Indian block printing and Chinese ceramic white. \$60, jcpenney.com

3
curving cutouts
NAT'L LIP
34 1/2" W x 21 1/2" H

Avoid looking design notes for a lightweight stool that's easy to move. Its traditional Chinese red glaze and cutouts make it a subtle way to add color.



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at
J.C. Penney

1
vibrant ottoman
OVERSTOCK
12"W x 17"H
In soft shades
of green, this unit
is hand made in
durable porcelain
that comes with
the colorist
toss patterns.
\$97. overstock.com

2
blue and
white
POULIN
12"W x 15 1/2"H
This casual floral
table evokes
19th-century
Ohio ceramics
made for export.
Handmade, made
it is to move
around. \$68.
poulin.com

3
squared away
EMILYAN
HOME & GARDEN
12"W x 15"H
Its square top
makes a perfect
table surface for
food or drink. Its
modern orange
glaze adds a pop of
color. \$132.
emilyanhome.com

4
airy geometry
WEST ELK
12"W x 15 1/2"H
This contemporary
ceramic table has
a base of air, with
plenty of holes
placed to allow
air and light to
pass through.
\$129.
westelk.com

5
earthy glaze
EMILYAN
HOME & GARDEN
12"W x 15"H
Hand applied
glazing creates
a colorful, deep
and varied look
on this piece. Its
shaped base, \$135.
emilyanhome.com

6
dark metallic
OVERSTOCK
12"W x 15 1/2"H
Night lead to a
high, all-in-one
table. This spotted
metallic look
is sure to be a
standout in any
setting. \$132.
overstock.com

7
hand-painted
OLSON
12 1/2"W x 15 1/2"H
An outdoor design
of white and
black, this piece
is a perfect mix
of nature and
art. \$132.
olson.com

8
modern floral
EMILYAN
HOME & GARDEN
12"W x 15"H
This piece is
made of a
durable, hand-
painted ceramic.
\$132.
emilyanhome.com

9
white swirls
WEST ELK
12"W x 15 1/2"H
Clouds of white
swirls on a black
background.
Look and texture
are modern, as
is the base. \$132.
westelk.com

OTHER OPTIONS

Today's look on the classic
drum-shaped stool are
reverting to the form in a wide
variety of materials, from
natural fibers to lightweight synthetics
to decorative metals.



10
15"W x 17"H

This woven seat piece adds texture
to the look. \$132. overstock.com



11
12"W x 15 1/2"H

A lightweight metal mesh material
adds a modern look to the piece.
\$132. overstock.com



12
12"W x 15 1/2"H

This piece is made of a
durable, hand-painted ceramic.
\$132. emilyanhome.com



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

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Cottage-style bedroom

Luxurious fabrics and one-of-a-kind accents make waking up a pleasure in this bright and airy retreat. by JESSICA ROBERTS-RENN
Photograph by MARCO RIOSA/STUDIO

The average person spends a usual 8 hours each day in the bedroom—yet it often lags behind the kitchen, the bathroom, and even the living room when it comes to getting some decorating TLC. Not so with this master bedroom, which is featured in the new book *Cottage Home* (Rizzoli). “It was top priority because it has such great light,” says Terry Pylant of Atlanta-based Historical Concepts, which designed the space. The result is a cheerful, sun-dappled room with furnishings that are full of character, down to the very last detail. To wit, railroad-trim bedposts on upholstered headboard and a lin that corners, vibrant accents highlight an updated wing chair’s angles, and a vintage mattress quilt covers the bed. Colors inspired by the home’s coastal location—sky-blue walls and pops of red-orange that evoke a sunset—top off the look. Read on for ways to create a stately Irish spot in your home. ■

textured quilt

Park your covers with style & Aerie’s ultra-soft cotton quilted cover in pale turquoise. \$449 for full/queen; homegoods.com for details



DIY headboard

To up the coziness factor of your bed, make an update to the headboard. All you need is 1/2-inch plywood cut to size plus 6-inch foam, batting fabric and railroad trim. For the step-by-step go to: headboard.com/step022. Fabric, \$34 per yard; color.com/enr.com

camp stool

Modern after an antique. Birch leaflet seat from the Home Ltd. Italy upholstered in blue. \$55; homegoods.com



wall and trim paint

An emerald sea or navy blue on the walls creates a spa-like atmosphere. The deep blue on the window shutters makes for a playful contrast. Harmony Interiors LLC in Los Angeles and Regale Blue, \$44 per gallon; shenellwilliams.com



get this look for less

industrial pendant

To evoke the airy lightness of the homeowners’ primary bedroom, try for much less with this factory-inspired fixture. \$299; shadesoflight.com



wing chair

A modern take on a classic style, this painted seat offers a shot of bold color when upholstered in brick-red Sunbrella fabric. \$379; ballandbrynn.com



framed prints

Bring some life to bare walls by stacking botanical images (these come from a 1950s wildlife print) inside white shadow boxes. Frame, \$29; ian.com



tailored-trim ottoman
Aster-front studs lend this take on a leather perch extra touch. \$200; leapinglions.com



table lamp

A tailored shade with subtle complement to the sculptural glass base of this lamp. \$229; leapinglions.com

cotton rug

The faded blue stripes of this reversible floor mat recall the look of vintage railroad ties. \$229 for a 6-by-9-foot; leapinglions.com



Did you give
it a thump?

From making sure it's just the right depth to, yes, checking out its soundproofing, here are five things to consider when buying a stainless-steel sink. BY DEBORAH KALLAWAY • Photos and info: ALISON MOSE

1
Google Scholar

It is used the all-around, short type, which is characteristic—*and virtually unique*—of the 10- and 20-gram level gauges. We need to test sleep over 20- versus 27-gauge, but when you get to 30-33-gauge, the metal is in the prime 10-bering and 10-bering, and less, as it is.

2.

the Irish, these ladies are anxious to make, tonight's speech and can't hold back. I'm in 10 Irish silk, in the other hand, holds I'm in 10 silk when the country, across the road. Keep in mind that another mood ends up in other Irish or is lower, which could strain your back at a while point you might, make inventing in a case back. Show me the best. This got more in them with again, correct, it might end up in the best, but not the best when for every the angle, and so down.

3

Look for subway tunnels to glow with neon, which doubles the impact of spring water and clarifying silverness, and also to be occasionally lit by the hope of a subway car. If the subway is like a cathedral, it's either lightning or nuclear war by 20

4 Study the intermediates

Distemper should be considered to reflect the combined, 1 to 2 and 300 series, or about 22 percent of the total (20 percent of the total for 1 and 2 series).

5 Add nicotine. For a nicotine dose of

These photos come with drill instructions and, because, you can't drill, there's a section on design. In another box, I found the book owner's own scribbles on the house color and border designs when she was a girl in the sixties. And a section on the left or right—no, no, no—no, better yet, while the book isn't a painting, consider another alternative, the perfect A&P, when, doesn't life design and have a wonderful look. Counting on my nose, no, no, no, some of the best look, look, look, look.



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Rag on a soft shade for a dappled look

Found the perfect color? Make it even better with the help of a second shade, glaze, and an old T-shirt. BY KIM HARTMAN • PHOTOGRAPHY: WENDY L. TWEED

It may sound strange, but lightly layering, or ragging on, a second color over one you love can actually enhance the base color. How? "It really lets you play with that color's light and depth," says decorative painter/legend Leen. Here, she populated an expanse of sky blue with cloud-like swags of white to give this room a fresh, breezy quality.

Once the base coat is dry, mix equal parts clear acrylic glaze and a top-coat color that's a lighter shade than the base and has a satin finish. Mask off areas you don't want to rag. Pull on rubber gloves, saturate a clean cotton rag—old T-shirts work well—with the glaze mix, and wring it out.

Push the rag in one hand and, holding tightly, dab on the topcoat. Leave some areas unwiped. Repack the rag every so often or whenever you notice a pattern starting to repeat. The result should be a 3-D effect—no fancy glazes required. ★

Low-tech tool

Reveal the color by using a T-shirt to dab the glaze. For a slightly more pronounced effect, you can use crumpled up, dry, clean paper towels.



Use a light brush, and to take the rag to reveal subtle variations.



PAINT: Yellow & Honey (base coat) and Antique White (glaze coat)

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landscaping

Need-to-know info for a lush lawn

Don't despair that spring has sprung and your turf isn't flourishing. Follow our advice to set your grass on the right path. **By SAL WALLACE**



Green, cool, and comfortable underfoot, real grass is as versatile as an outdoor surface gets. Whether hosting a spring yard sale, a summer cookout, or a game of touch football in the fall, your lawn works hard year-round. All that foot traffic may have left it a bit ragged, though, and any missed fall maintenance—that last dose of fertilizer you were supposed to spread, any bare patches that should have been seeded—may have caused your lawn to look a little worn out this spring, with thin spots and less color than you remember.

Now's the time to make amends with a proper feeding schedule and cover troublesome areas to stop budding pest and weed problems at their tracks. Read on for when to do right now and in the weeks ahead to cultivate a hardy, healthy patch of grass.

Green carpet: A thick, well-tended lawn is your best defense against weeds, which can't compete for space and nutrients. Leaving the grass long, dethatching or mowing encourages roots to grow deeper where they live rather than die off. Select a taller grass like fescue or tall fescue, and avoid weed seeds from germinating.

PHOTO: ALI KATZ/ISTOCKPHOTO

Adding on above the garage

That area above your car's resting spot? Turns out it's the most cost-effective way to gain bedroom space. Just ask the owners of the current TOH TV project—and the team who designed and built the over-the-garage addition. **BY JESSICA BRONKHORST • Photographs by NATALIA**

"We love our house's location, but it was tight on space," says Geoff Allen of the 1923 seaside Cape Cod in Barrington, Rhode Island, that he shares with wife Michelle Potoczni and their young daughter. Though the 1,600-square-foot, two-bedroom house, the site of the latest TOH TV project, was built as a seasonal residence, the family plans to live there year-round. So they turned to architect Mary Dorsey Bennett and general contractor Andy Tipaldi to help them envision a plan that would make the best use of its space—and even square it a few more.

Tapping the couple's wish list was an extra bedroom and bath space. Given the house's small lot and street-laid zoning laws, Bennett described an addition as the only spot it could go: above the attached, unheated garage. "An over-the-garage addition doesn't increase a house's footprint, which helps reduce cost," says Bennett. "But it also presents unique challenges in planning and construction." What does a homeowner interested in such an add-on need to know? We asked Bennett and Tipaldi for their advice and about how the project played out at Geoff and Michelle's house.

1. Think from the outside in.

Over-the-garage additions have a huge impact on curb appeal once they're done, says the street and tend to be large, a typical two-car garage is 24 by 24 or bigger. "You don't want it to look like a blob,"



building up The attached garage (BEFORE) was added in several years after the house was completed. Above it, the architect and contractor designed and built an addition that accommodates a bedroom and a small portion of a new bath's footprint. The entire house gets a curb appeal boost (AFTER) from new exterior siding, exterior paint, new landscaping, and a new front porch, which help the new space blend properly with the existing structure.



With careful planning, homeowners Geoff Allen and Michelle Potoczni gained space above their attached one-car garage for their young daughter's bedroom.

scale
3'



tacked on bits," says Bennett. A few strategies that will help it appear seamless: Make sure features such as gables and windows are harmonious with the house's style; add facade details, like trim, to break up expanses of siding; and, if possible, schedule the project in tandem with an exterior upgrade, like repainting or re-siding. Bennett designed Geoff and Michelle's addition with a cross gable that extends along the full length of the house, which also allowed for an attic-to-bath mechanical egress. For visual symmetry, she crossed double windows over the garage door and a gable-end window over the window below.

2. Make sure the structure is up to snuff.

An engineer will need to verify that the garage's existing framing and foundation can bear the weight of an addition. Garage walls often

have exposed framing, says Tipaldi, but if you're finished, you'll need to cut away the drywall to see what's behind it. In Barrington, Tipaldi installed a larger header above the garage door to help carry the load of the rooms above, and put in a support beam for the addition's floor joists.

For the foundation, a contractor will need to dig several holes to check its depth and condition along the garage's perimeter; if the foundation is inadequate, he'll need to bolster it or put in a new one, both of which are complex, pricey jobs. Fortunately, Geoff and Michelle's foundation beneath the garage's brick and side walls was sufficient. A new footing was added on the street side of the house, however, to accommodate other structural changes during the remodel.

3. Keep it safe in case of fire.

Building code requires 16-inch-thick fire-rated drywall, known as Type X, on the garage ceiling and walls when an addition is put on there. (The wall shared by the garage and the house should already have it.) "If the framing were left exposed, it would be damaged too rapidly in a fire," says Tipaldi. Fire-retardant and the like, must be sealed tightly.

4. Insulate while you're at it. Code calls for insulating the walls between the garage ceiling and the walls in the new room. In Barrington, Tipaldi also recommended adding insulation to unfinished garage walls before drywall goes up. "Anything you can do

to keep this area a bit warmer will help the new room feel more comfortable," says Tipaldi. At Geoff and Michelle's, open-cell spray-foam insulation was used to form a barrier against the area's aging walls, with the new bedroom's floor surpassing the required R-30 rating.

5. Think about where to put plumbing.

Yes, you can build a bedroom above an attached garage, says Bennett and Tipaldi. But pipes need to stay in a place that's safe, and they can't go in exterior walls. This requires close coordination among your plumber and contractors to make sure pipe runs are planned properly and installation is timed to avoid awkward. At Geoff and Michelle's house, supply lines for the second-floor bath were tucked above the addition's floor joists and only the room's tub sits over the garage, the rest of the space is situated over the laundry room to tap into existing pipe chases.

6. Don't forget the impact on adjacent spaces.

This project isn't simply about adding on a room at two, of course. "You need to access the new space from inside, which typically calls for reconfiguring existing rooms and putting in a hallway, so we'd better," says Bennett. Geoff and Michelle ultimately decided it was better to take on the bedroom addition while the rest of the house was also being revamped, instead of putting it off until a later date, as they'd consider. Look for the full details on their renovation in our May issue. ■

Kills germs, dries clear.

A newel-post pedestal, plus a ceiling medallion on the base, add decorative flair to this practical piece. By: JESSICA STEIGERSON • Photographed by JOYCE GILKIN

Difficulty: Easy to moderate
The incident featuring a hole saw to reshape the square end of the new post.

Whether it's built to make residents feel good, or built to make for good use, compact polycrystalline is one of the hardest things you'll ever own. With a bit of UV know-how and some simple, sensible, you can make this mirror-topped version be a lot less than the cost of a new look-alike. The Old House and modern Tom Saba built in using two great wood rounds, a new set for the pedestal, and a beveled-edge mirror and ceiling installation to dress up the top and base. These years a dream house, and just it wherever you need a little housework.

Individuals with this performance record and
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 performance, Period, Career's
 new/young, new/young, new/young

Page 10

HOW IT'S DONE

Make a mirror-topped accent table

Accent tables are usually 18 to 24 inches tall, so the newel post is cut to height and fastened to the tabletop and base with lag screws. We chose a post with a square bottom for extra bracing. Tom used a hole saw bit to round it off where it meets the round base. "It makes the pedestal shape more streamlined," he says. Use mirror adhesive for the tabletop, as regular adhesive may damage the mirror's backing.



Build this table

It takes an afternoon to build this table and cost about \$20. For more ideas, visit www.woodmagazine.com.

1 Prep the tabletop and base. First, mark the center point on each wood round. Place one round on top of a square of scrap wood. Use a No. 30 countersink bit to drill through the center; this will create a pilot hole for the lag screw and a shallow recess for the screw head so that it'll sit flush with the surface. Repeat with the second round. You now have a tabletop and base.



3 Reshape the bottom end of the pedestal. Clamp the pedestal to a work surface with the bottom end hinged over the edge. Fit a hole saw's drill bit into the pilot hole you made in Step 1. Drive the saw through the end to cut off the corners, leaving behind a round shape. Sand the cut surface smooth.

5 Glue the molding median to the base. Flip the base over so that the side with just the pilot hole (not the countersink recess) faces up. Center the median on the base and mark its location. Apply vinyl adhesive caulk to the back side of the median and press it into place. Use caulk to seal gaps around the median's perimeter and center hole.



6 Fasten the base to the pedestal. Apply wood glue to the bottom of the pedestal. Begin driving the lag screw through the underside of the base. Once the screw protrudes through the base, slip it into the pilot hole at the bottom of the pedestal. Tighten the screw.

7 Size the pedestal. Choose the table's height and mark two points on the newel post, one at each end. (For a stable table, don't cut within the mirror's laminated section.) Make sure to leave just enough length at the bottom—typically 1/4 inch—to drive your hole saw all the way through (see Step 3 photo). Use a mitre saw to cut the pedestal.



7 Fasten the tabletop to the pedestal. Apply wood glue to the top of the pedestal. Begin driving the lag screw through the top of the tabletop. Once the screw protrudes through the top's underside, slip it into the pilot hole at the top of the pedestal. Tighten the screw.

8 Drill pilot holes in the pedestal. At each end of the pedestal, draw an X from corner to corner to mark the center. Drill pilot holes into the center points for the lag screws.



Build with Tom

Most of our Center Projects profiles at www.woodmagazine.com feature ideas to improve your skills and enjoy your work.

Layering on the cottage charm

A handsome pergola-topped porch gives the eye—and visitors—good reason to linger. **by ERIC HADENMAN + photos by JENNIFER CRITAL**



(before)



The chimney gets a new DRX checking a big upgrade over the old shingles.

"We've always talked about doing something to make the house look less like a straight ranch, but we've never come up with any plan," says Cheryl Hadenman about the home in Hart Springs, South Dakota, that she shares with her husband and son.

Heeding her all-too-familiar lament, we asked Greta Weil and Barbara Freedman, of Weil Freedman Architects, in New York City, for a double whammy to spruce up the front. To take advantage of the south-facing exposure, Weil and Freedman added a sun porch and a pergola that provides distinction and a splash of shade while still leaving sun into the front rooms. "It extends the concept of the front entry and makes it larger than the door itself," says Weil. "It also refreshes the house without adding much cost." Mulberry window and door light unify the facade—and these elements can be added over time. The flower box under the kitchen window helps balance all the porch additions, which were well received. "I love the pergola," says Cheryl. "It makes the house really stand out, but it still blends in with a neighborhood."

Finishing touches

A few tidy accessories go a long way toward accentuating the cottage look. 4



ROCKON
Its ethereal stone and cylindrical form add cottage charm. Trans Globe Lighting: \$34



benches
This all-weather porch looks like wood but never needs painting and won't rot. Trex: \$240

paint
Linen and blue-green horizontally break the typical cottage white palette. Benjamin Moore, \$30 per gallon

WANT A PHOTOSHOP REDO? Send us photos to redo@thelabhouse.com

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER CRITAL; STYLING BY ERIC HADENMAN

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Build a garden gate

Get two stout posts and some stock cedar, and you've got the makings of a quaint entrance to any path. *By JENNIFER STEADMAN • Photograph by STEVE DEWITT*

Cost: \$200

Time: 10 to 12 hours

Difficulty: Moderate. Cutting the beveled palm and setting plumb posts require finesse.

The whole idea of a garden gate may be what you're after, but who says you need the whole thing? A simple white garden gate provides the same feel. Install it in the head of a path, leading to a garden or your front door, and flank the posts with tall plantings. Though there are many styles that we can't count, choosing one could be as easy as remembering historic designs. In fact, it may be necessary: some locations enforce historical accuracy, which is how we landed on this design in Belport, New York. Luckily, *This Old House* senior editorial editor Mark Epstein's approach applies to a variety of styles. Follow along to see how to build a gate that won't get you plucked by the locals.



For complete instructions, turn the page.

Illustration by Jennifer Steadman. Photo by Steve Dewitt. Gate posts are 4x4 cedar. Gate is 4x4 cedar. Gate is 4x4 cedar. Gate is 4x4 cedar.

4. Create the pales

A. Cut the base levels. Use 1 level of two sides of the tips to shape the pile's vertical slats or pales. At the top, make a small mark/indent in from exchange. Set the miter saw blade to 45 degrees and place a spade on edge against the fence. Align the blade with the mark and cut the base. Tap the board so its the same on the opposite edge as shown. Cut all the piles the same way.

B. Cut the edge levels. Lay each board flat on the saw. Keep the blade at 45 degrees, line it up with the point where the base meets the edge, and clip the corners, as shown. Once you've shaped all the tops, cut the piles to height by beveling the bottoms at 5 degrees. Insert a spade with the slats at top of the apron. Press the piles.



Tip: Use a combination square with the blade depth set to 1/4 inch to quickly make accurate cut marks.

see how it's done

To watch a video of this project, scan the code with your smartphone. Or go to bit.ly/weekendremodel



5

5. Finish the gate

A. Install the parties. Center the first pale on the frame, with the corner of the bottom meeting the top of the apron cap and not quite touching it. Insert a string gap is critical to allowing off and ground, secured place makes a perfect spacer. Using a drill driver and 1/4 inch stainless steel screws, attach the center pale to the top and bottom rails. Then take two of the shorter pales and attach them to both the sides and the frame. Evenly space the remaining pales in ascending order between the center pale and the rails. Cut a block equal to the width between pales and use it as a spacer. Attach the pale. Finally, secure a filler block between the first two pales for the latch.

B. Secure the latches. Lay the brace across the pale's beveled side up in line with the top rail. Use a hammer and 1/4 inch stainless steel siding nails to attach it. Next, push the gate, posts and caps.



6

6. Add the caps and level the gate

A. Secure the post caps. Using a caulk gun, apply adhesive to the post caps and press them in place on top of each post. If there is any gap, be sure to center the cap.

B. Slide the gate in place. Prop up the gate across blocks between the posts, at least 2 inches above the ground, just above the apron, side and. Slide it level, and use a level to check your work. Be sure to leave gaps even gaps on each side. Center the gate on the posts. Then insert a piece between them.



What's your DIY project?
Post your idea, ask for help, or share your success in our new community. Share your tale, be a hero, or become a hero. bit.ly/weekendremodel your idea

7. Attach the hardware

A. Position the hinges. Hold the strap hinges and then lower yourself up to the back of the gate, make sure the top and bottom rails. Mark these screw holes on the pale and post.

B. Attach the hinges. Lay the pale flat, and align the strap hinges with their marks. Drill pilot holes into the frame, and screw the strap hinges on the post, making the pins into them to hang the gate. Check to see that the gate can swing through the swing. If it does, install the upper pin cap to lock this place.

C. Add the latch and stop. With the gate closed, position the stop on the post below the brace. Drill pilot holes and screw it to the post. Working from the back, position the latch assembly on the top rail and post, mark their hole locations, install a hole for the spindle and pilot holes for the lockers. Finish by mounting the latch and corresponding hardware.





diy'er's delight

AFTER 70 YEARS IN THE
SAME FAMILY, A STALWART
LITTLE HOUSE COMES INTO
ITS OWN—WITH HELP FROM
ITS HANDY NEW OWNERS

Anyone can find a house that's already "done." Much harder is finding a house in just the right state of readiness—well built, well preserved, and acting for a ratio. "The barbs were original, the kitchen had its original cabinets—the furniture still had a mark for the telephone!" says Jim Zemburski, mulling the first time he sat in his wife, Sharyn, took a close look at their 1938 Colonial Revival. "Nothing terrible had been done to the house, just enhanced by a 99-year-old woman whose parents were its first owners. Actually, not much had been done at all, which meant that for all its charm and good proportions, the little house came with a big honey-do list. Perfect! "When we were looking to move, I wanted a project," says Jim.

by Deborah Kellison
photographs by Tris Govers
produced by Corinne Scardine
styling by Ingrid Lorenz

and the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.
As part of our annual 100th Anniversary
celebration, the owners of this 1938 Colonial
Revival had the living room built for "colorful
yet historic" interior design. The room was
designed to be a tribute to the 100th anniversary of the
19th Amendment.

brightened up
The living room fireplace has new painted shutters, custom shutters, and a new gas-burning insert.



galley-kitchen come back

LEFT Light reflecting finishes add dimension to the narrow space. BELOW Homeowners Sherry and Jim Zimbrick built the box to the breezeway, which shows to the kitchen. RIGHT The weather-and-dryer side behind cabinet doors in the former breakfast room, which now serves as an extra room of the kitchen.



Sherry, on other hand, required a little convincing. She'd been drawn to the house because it was on a desirable lot on a desirable street in Boston, Connecticut, easy distance from Jim's job at a marketing and communications firm. She also appreciated its sturdy construction, which Jim attributes to the quality of the wood and craftsmanship when it was built. "It needed a lot of work, but everything was in great shape," he recalls, without irony. Still, "it took some getting used to," says Sherry, recalling the house's old-fashioned size and overall taste: many yards, dated baths, vintage furniture and rusty-crenel turrets, and only 1,400 square feet, not including the unfinished basement and attic. It was a bit of a quandary when the opening, newly built house nearby where they'd raised their kids.

As if to argue its case, the house came with its 1938 hand-finished blue-green, complete with drawings of built-ins to hold letters, telephones, books, and collections. Take the plaster walls and oak floors, those charming pocket doors: registers still stood ready to serve.

The couple talked about an addition but worried, Jim says, that it might "look like it had been bolted on or stuck." And anyway, with their daughter in college and their son practically out the door, weren't they preparing for a new life as empty nesters? Sharyn, an accountant, concluded that it was "the perfect-size house for the two of us, and with less expense."

Best of all, "we could make it when we wanted," Jim recalls, and that turned out to be an enhancement of what it had been all along—plus a few concessions to personal taste, practicality, and the times. A first-floor laundry area was high on their list, along with a Viking range and a wine fridge. In terms of finishes, Jim says, "we wanted the house to look as close to period as possible, but not so closely that we wouldn't buy something we liked because it was 30 years old."

They could live with the crisscross layout, complete with a narrow gallery kitchen and a single bath upstairs. Both baths as well as the kitchen needed updating, as did the living room bath-ers, which had narrowed the years with Harvard and Colonial style trims. The logical spot for Sharyn's office, the guest room, lacked storage and desk space, and landscaping was old, aside from a ragged, non-blocking rhododendron that hid the pretty, peach-like horevay. Worst, the house, a classic 1930s country gables, looked out like crazy.

The most conversation was about Jim working in their general electric store and their renting another place until the dust settled. "I said, 'I'm not moving twice, it's too expensive,'" Sharyn recalls. "So we lived here and worked around our selves—and always made sure our bathroom was functioning."

A visit to the town's building department revealed that the most recent permit had been pulled 15 years earlier, when the previous owner upgraded the wiring and installed central air, piping it inefficiently through existing heating ducts. The couple decided to create a second zone by installing an



details worth keeping

The original three-corner pedestal was revived with hand-painted paint, and the original oak floors were refinished with polyurethane.



period-style upgrades
RIGHT: Jim used sleek cabinets and trim to create custom built-ins in the home office. BELOW: The adjacent bath's headboard wallcoat is another Jim touch. BOTTOM: The old front hall telephone took on a period look with a painted metal plate to screen the rings, rather than a modern conversation piece.



floor plans

The redo preserved the Colonel's 1930s-era color siding (above) and the original 1,500-square-foot layout. On the first floor, the guest room became an office; the breakfast alcove became an extension of the kitchen (with hidden laundry machines), and doors came out to a side terrace floor from the kitchen to the living room.



air handler and additional ductwork in the attic. To cut drafts and increase comfort, they would have to replace the windows and pump spring floors and insulation into the exterior walls.

Time to line up a few subcontractors.

"There's skill or hard and manual labor hard, and I have learned to live with my ability," says Jim of his own-assembly cabinets, insulation, plumbing, and other tricky infrastructure. No, thanks. But he will take on projects that involve a ladder, even if halfway up it he may wonder why. "The cupola was probably the hardest job we tackled, in terms of skill and endurance," he says, referring to the dry bar and son Drew scrambled onto the garage roof, moved scaffolding so that they wouldn't have to work at an angle, struggled to cut through two layers of roofing, installed plywood sheathing to create a flat, stable surface, and then loaded the cupola into place.

Rebuilding the crown in the built-in linen closet was a bear, while replacing the cabinet doors and molding in the living room was, well, nearly a breeze. "A good husband and his was just of him you can play with," notes Jim, who enjoyed figuring out which construction workers best





handicapped to host garden

ABOVE: The breezeway now opens in front onto a professionally designed formal garden with dwarf lilac standards and pruned flowering shrubs. **RIGHT:** The breezeway between the kitchen and the garage kept its existing windows while getting a makeover floor

First, we replaced the windows, stripped and repainted the cedar siding and dropped siding, repaired the chimney, hung custom garage doors, and installed counters, tile, and plumbing in the kitchen and bath. They also ended up having to rewire radios and reduce moisture in the basement when tests showed slightly elevated levels of both. After two years, the work was done—but not really, at least. The couple is still trying with insulating the breezeway and upgrading its single-pane windows and French doors. “And then we could put in electric heat/cool heat,” Jim says.

Seri-Slowey, in her turn the household keeper, “The breezeway is now my favorite part of the house. I must walk through it twenty times a day.” She adds, “We’ll never be done—and we love it.” ■



so you want to be your own GC...

AS A SEASONED D'Yer WHO KNOWS HIS WAY AROUND A LUMBERYARD, HOMEOWNER JIM ZEMBRUSKI ALSO KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT SERVING AS HIS OWN GENERAL CONTRACTOR. HERE, HE SHARES SOME OF HIS HARD-EARNED WISDOM

Do your homework. “Before you hire a subcontractor, learn as much as you can about what’s involved, including each step, the cost of materials, and the time required. One plumber told me he wanted \$3,000 for flexible tubing—that’s crazy! The more you understand, the better you can communicate. I picked up a lot by watching the instructional videos at thefixthouse.com.”

Talk it out. “Have an intelligent conversation about the bid. Ask how it was arrived at. Sometimes the highest bid is actually the best.”

Get into the details. “Sort out your expectations so you won’t have disagreements halfway through. Ask the guy what’s changing the cabinets, how he’s going to do it, and which materials he plans to use. You’d be surprised how many people use drywall screws for everything.”

Choose your DIY projects wisely. “I knew my limits—I can’t demolish or install granite countertops. But I knew I could work alongside our subcontractors, whether it was cleaning up, yard work, or refurbishing stairs and screens. I’ve learned to choose small DIY projects that make a big difference: like painting and adding crown molding. The waxwaxing in the downstairs bath—that was a Saturday morning.”

Ask how much you’d pay yourself. “We were ready to hire a crew to hang our shutters, but they wanted \$350 a window—not unreasonable, but for that price, I figured I could do it myself.” Others might be daunted by 18 windows, but not Jim. “Less time than I expected,” he says.



small DIY jobs, big payoffs

1. Jim improved the exterior around their window seat by lining it with cedar.
2. He and son Drew attached the garage roof to seal cracks and leaks if the rapid rain ever hit the eastern shore.
3. Disappointed by added framing to the lower porch, Jim added its owners and pilers, and added a roll of steel for extra protection.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU REMODEL YOUR LAUNDRY ROOM

BY LAURA FISHER KAISER

The laundry room has finally come into its own as a bright and organized cleanup command center, whether in a tidy corner of the basement or a nook next to the kitchen.

For help updating yours, check out our expert advice on everything from energy-wise machines and thrifty flooring options to the best labor-saving layout and how to safeguard the house from a potential flood or fire.



WHERE TO PUT IT

For lots of us, the basement is best fit. But many homeowners who can spare the space and moisture prefer to have the laundry closer to bedrooms or the kitchen. Here's what to factor in before making a move.



On an upper floor (PDS): Proximity to where dirty clothes are a hellacious schlepping distance with hampers. One frequent-room-sharing laundry area is or near a bathroom. **CONS:** Noise and vibration require extra insulation and a motion-dampening pad. Leaks can damage land, floor noise. Closet installation requires a vented door and additional space area and clothes machines to dissipate dryer heat.

On the first floor (PDS): Floor where most other housekeeping chores take place. May be able to share kitchen or powder-room plumbing lines. **CONS:** Laundry can pile up on cooking, eating, and feet. Traffic areas. Need to carry hampers upstairs. Machines hidden in cabinets require vented doors and clearance space for proper ventilation.



LOW IMPACT LAYOUT

You don't need a huge space, in fact, some of the most efficient laundry rooms are quite small with the following four elements arranged in close proximity, not more than a step or two away from one another.

- 1. Appliances:** Stack them or put them side by side to transfer wet clothes easily from washer to dryer. Machines should be placed directly in front of utility hookups.
- 2. Stacks:** Store detergent, stain sticks, and other clothing care items, such as a sewing kit, in closets, cabinets, cubbies, or open shelving that's above or next to machines.
- 3. Baskets:** Leave enough room in front of machines to empty or fill them easily, and create a nearby niche to tuck baskets or hampers out of the way but within easy grabbing distance.
- 4. Work surface:** Add a counter or a freestanding table adjacent to stacked or top-loading machines for sorting, treating, and folding. With front loaders placed side by side, consider installing a counter on top of the machines to save space.

is, in closets, cabinets, cubbies, or open shelving that's above or next to machines.

DELIVERY-DRY REMINDER: Measure the dimensions of not only the area where the machines will be installed but also doorways and stairwells that they will have to pass through to get to the laundry room. Most machines need about a 30-inch-wide opening.

THE CASE FOR FRONT LOADERS

They cost about \$130 to \$300 more, but front-loading washers tend to clean better and more efficiently than most top loaders—a factor specific to up to 1,200 quarts of water used to cut drying time and energy consumption. A front loader also offers design flexibility and comfort: you can stack it with a dryer to save floor space, top it with a counter for folding, or raise it on a pedestal to a back-friendly height. Trade the latter with a top-loading washer, you'll have to be part of the effort to reach into the machine.



THE RIGHT FOLDING BOARD FOR YOU

If you're the type to take your wrinkled shirts to the dryer so you can watch TV while you press, go for the classic folding board. But if you prefer to use in the laundry room, consider one of these built-in space savers instead.

Drop-down board: It folds in a recessed or wall-mounted cabinet. Pro models, such as the Deluxe In-A-Way Wall Folding Board with a built-in timer, cost \$150. Other models are card and fold storage shelves and electronic fold. **Fold-out board:** The compact board unfolds from behind a door drawer front, shown below for an example look. The Rev-A-Shelf Pro Series Board (\$179) rocks a cord to fold it into a flat that you can roll into an existing drawer.

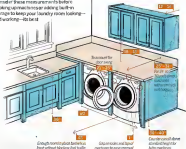


GOING DRYER: GAS OR ELECTRIC?

The choice here is your laundry room will likely decide your choice. But if you have both a gas hook-up and a 240-volt outlet, go for gas. It costs about \$50 to \$100 more than an electric model, but it's cheaper to operate over the long haul—25 to 20 cents per load, compared with 30 to 40 cents for electric. Considering that the average American family does 300 loads of laundry a year, that's an annual energy savings of \$15 to \$40 with gas.

COMFORTABLE ECLIPSE

Consider these measurements before looking up machines or adding built-in storage to keep your laundry room looking—and working—its best.



WHICH LIGHTS WERE

For general ambient illumination in addition to any natural light in the room, choose a low-profile ceiling mount fixture. A pendant is a more stylish alternative, but steer clear of the folding arm and upper cable/chain unless you want to play wack-a-mole. For reading, stressor or spotlight varieties while you can go with task lighting, such as LED undercabinet strips, which are energy efficient and stay cool to the touch, or focused overhead spots.

FRONT COVER AND CM. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY

It depends on what you value more: extra sleeping space or a wetter surface.

Psychiatry 2000; 65: 200–210

- Good storage for light quarters because they sit beneath machines and don't eat up floor space

- » Before the washer and dryer, saving you from having to bend over so much to reach into the machines
- » Can be ordered from the manufacturer that makes your machines for a perfect match! Just be sure to check spec. drawers should be deep enough (typically 12 to 15 inches) to hold detergent bottles upright.



THE NEW AND
IMPROVED UTILITY SINK

Stainless steel plastic laundry tubs slowness. Lack under-sink storage and an extra deep tub are practical. A better option is a 30- to 12-inch deep apron or rectangular stainless steel sink with curved, easy-to-clean corners. Paired with a post-rinse faucet or one with a pull-out spray, the setup is perfect for doing delicates, washing hands, and filling buckets and watering cans.



Counter-top (1200–1800)

- Fits across the top of the washer and dryer for a large work surface for sorting, breaking stacks, and folding.
- Prevents items from falling in between or behind your machines.
- Could be a custom counter or a profile rubber tray (made by several manufacturers to complement their machines). The results staining has a built-in backplash and often comes with two pockets for laundry supplies and other small items.

REPORTS

Weather mishaps are among the leading causes of home floods, and dryers account for thousands of fires annually. But with some key supplies, you can avert disaster and



rather than a plastic flex hose.

> A weather box that's recessed in the wall so that water valves are easily accessible and hoses don't loosen or get damaged by getting squished behind the machine
Galeo Washing Machine Drip of



gas, shown left
to catch drips, especially for
machines on main living levels.

VENTILATION CHECKLIST

☐ Make metal vent-pipe runs to the outdoors as short as possible, with limited bends for the best airflow (45° is max., assuming

- ☐ Install self-closing exhaust vent, rather than a louvered one, to keep outdoor air from coming into your home when the dryer is off.
- ☐ Consider putting in a bathroom-type vent fan in the ceiling to prevent moisture buildup in a laundry with a stall shower or wet-cure station.

SMART AND CHEERFUL FINISH MATERIALS.

Chairs,benches, washers, and soiled items tend to get splashed, sprayed and dumped in the laundry room, so when it comes to freshness, practicality, durability and affordability over luxury, but that doesn't mean your room needs to be dull. Consider these hardworking, thrifty surface options that can also add color and texture to liven up your laundry space.

FLUIDS

and vinyl floors shrug off moisture with less upsurge than wood and without the worry of expensive tile cracking or discolored lines.



54115

palet hardwood flooring; and glossy ceramic tiles can take a beating while enjoying your laundry room with bright hues and personality.

THE BEST BASKET
IF YOU...

Take sorting seriously: Individual stacking baskets that nest (\$30 each) or metal bins that hold in multiple rows.

Active Users (138)

Like the roll-A, wheeled gantry rack with base (\$20 to \$40) Navigators offers Lightweight soft-sided vertical shelving.

STORAGE

consider open shelves and cubbies. To stylishly conceal clutter under a counter, hang a curtain printed with a subtle pattern.



COUNTERTOPS

by numerous solid surfacing surfaces. Corbin (shown in Silver Birch) engineered skins or laminates, which cost the same or less and come in multifunctional shades.

similar to the

loop handled
quarters one shown
at right (about \$20
each). Traditional
rectangular baskets
are unsightly and
lead to scraped
kneecaps.



ALL THE EXTRAS

There are dozens of ways to upgrade your laundry room, but which of the bells and whistles are really worth the extra money?

WORTH THE SPURGE

- **Replacing an old washer:** Switching out one that's more than 10 years old for an energy star model can save you \$35 a year in energy bills because they're 50 percent more efficient and use 50 percent less water. Plus, you may qualify for rebates and tax credits.
- **Stainless steel washer/dryer and dryer drawers:** They last longer than plastic or porcelain-coated steel and won't chip, crack, scratch or leave rust stains on clothes.
- **Laundry chute (2):** If you've got a clear path between floors—no existing plumbing or ductwork to contend with—eliminating those long trips down the stairs with arms full of clothes can be easier than you may think. Old houses where it may even be able to convert to a decommissioned dumbwaiter.
- **Simple shower stall (2):** Use it to bathe the dog, rinse off muddy outdoor gear, and hang clothes as they drip dry.
- **Movable or built-in island (3):** Not just for kitchens, these workhorses can serve as folding tables or a home-work station with stool seating, and provide extra storage for cleaning products, the vacuum, iron, craft and gift-wrapping supplies.
- **Television (4):** It'll keep you entertained during long periods of folding and ironing.



NOT WORTH THE SPURGE

- **Natural stone finishes:** such as marble, for counters and floors. They require sealing to prevent staining and don't absorb sound. With exceptions for high-visibility lavatories, such as one that adjoins a kitchen where you won't materials to match, they're rarely worth the expense and upkeep.
- **Drying cabinet:** This removes the moisture or dries your clothes with gentle heat and uses 90 percent less energy than conventional dryers, but at \$4,000, you'll never recoup the cost.

- **Jettied aisles with liners for hand washables:** Most washing machines these days have exchangeable cycles for delicates.
- **Stainless steel, which adds some styling power to a washer:** but not enough to justify its couple hundred dollars more on the price tag.
- **Interactive LCD displays on washers:** to track the progress of a load and get stain removal tips.
- **Built-in clothes lines:** They're dirtier but tend to trap moisture and get moldy. Better to stick with open clothes where air can circulate around them.

DECODING ENERGY STAR LABELS

Most HE (high efficiency) washers are also ENERGY STAR and WIF. Here's what the new acronyms mean: **MEF:** Modified Energy Factor is a measure of the energy used to run the washer and

heat the water. The higher the MEF, the more energy efficient the washer. **WIF:** Water Factor is based on the number of gallons of water consumed per cubic foot of capacity. The lower the WIF, the more money the washer

MULTITASKING LAUNDRIES

The laundry room increasingly plays host to a variety of household chores and activities, from pet grooming and sports to sewing and organizing sports gear, backpacks, and coats. Below: four double-duty rooms that don't wait.



BATHROOM Pull-down linens straight from the dryer in this combo room. A lowered door discreetly separates the laundry from the bathing area and provides extra ventilation for the machines.



PET CARE CENTER A shower pan on a custom island here holds the washer. It's designed for dog grooming, but also works great for spooling long-legs items, like throw rugs.



BEDROOM A laundry tent in the back entry allows family members to toss dirty sports clothes or school problem kids right into the washer so as not to track mud into the main living area. A foot bench with hooks above coats and bags, and closed cabinet keeps laundry supplies hidden from view.

3 INDOOR DRY-DRY OPTIONS

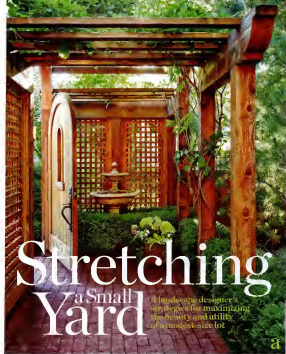
Clothes dryers cost about \$550 a year to run and are second only to refrigerators in terms of energy expenditures, so consider these electricity-free options when planning your new laundry room. Bonus: Air drying causes less wear and tear on your clothes, so they'll last longer and you won't have to shop as often.

- 1) **Hanging rod (\$3-\$5 per foot):** Make it metal, and securely mount it to bear the weight of wet garments.
- 2) **Free-standing clothesline (\$10-\$50):** Wall-mounted pull-out clotheslines available as a single line or multiple lines. Before use, it's a well-ventilated space where you can lay down a towel to catch drips.
- 3) **Folding rack (\$10-\$25):** Choose from wood, accordion-style and two-tier metal and mesh folding racks that expand to provide ample space to hang or to lay garments flat.

what room did you end?
Show us your laundry room makeover by a check for a win a weekend getaway. Enter at RealEstate.com/yourTGA



PHOTOS: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; DESIGN: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; STYLING: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

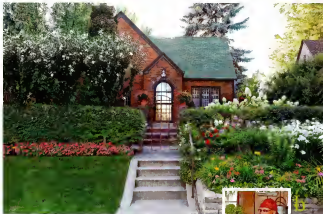


Stretching a Small Yard

A landscape designer's strategies for maximizing the beauty and utility of a modest-size lot

a

by Susan Heeger • photography by Mark Lehman • production by Colette Sciarloni • styling by Sunday Hendrickson



OPPOSITE: An arched wood gate to the left of the front entry opens into a fountain that muffles street noise. The brick path leads from front yard to backyard. RIGHT and ABOVE: Garden designer Mike Egleston agreed his home's street-facing landscape for beauty and privacy.



M

IKE EGGLESTON IS OFTEN ASKED to compare miracles from small, check-to-joint city lots. The Dover landscape designer's own yard, around a 1929 brick cottage south of downtown, is a prime example of his professional sleight of hand. Within an 80 by 120-foot lot, he has incorporated a sunny, street-side personal bath, a private entry court in the rear, an elevated outdoor dining room, a screened lounge terrace, a carpet of lawn, woodshed views, a potting shed, and several dramatic shrubs that lead to a small, quiet fountain. Front and back entrances, the latter marked by a western arbor off the alley behind his property, make a garden walk of coming home. Almost four acres, despite his Zone 4 climate, with its fragrant wisteria and

balcony, summer, let's get something in bloom—in pots and borders and on top of arches. Shouldn't blot out neighbors' houses, and it's easy to forget, when he and his wife and their teenage kids look back outside, that they're in a neighborhood of 600,000 people.

It wasn't so easy in 1989, when the couple bought the house, which sat wide open to its busy street with little more garden than a back-paved deck and a patch of grass. Happily, there were a few mature trees, and Engleton knew he could make his cramped lot feel larger with a well-considered plan for his green space as well as play space for the kids. "Whether you like things formal or informal," he says, "the mind wants organization. And when you create outdoor space that have a purpose, you use them." Gradually, the garden took the shape it has today, with gates and arbors marking passageways, thickening trees and shrubs, and welcoming fountains, like landscaping lessons are sure to inspire any aspiring gardener with big hopes for a small space.

1. Create a front-yard garden.

Design a gracious garden setting out how to show off your house's best features and provide privacy. Engleton matched the crisp lines of his vintage house with soft, English-style perennials that bloom against formal hedges. The hedges—dwarf hawthorn bush, *Eucalyptus alata* 'Gasparrata'—are much denser and less overly than mammoth well hedges, since they extend on both sides of the central aisle, make the lot appear wider. The low Engleton retaining wall he installed to edge his beds matches the home's warm brick facade, while the arched metal gate, inside the frame of an old church window, echoes the arched front door. Tree ferns atop Shasta and flashlight hydrangeas, layered in between the clipped hedges, screen the front-entry court and create the illusion of greater depth from across the house.

2. Go big with hardscape.

Don't try to maximize space by underestimating steps and walkways; paths should be at least 4 feet across, says Engleton. Sloppy paved areas look out of scale with your house—even modest homes present a large structure to work against—and they will shrink further once plants grow in around them. Engleton widened

the plan

Engleton divided his long narrow city lot into different zones for use and enjoy from the arched metal front gate to the gated arch that opens off the rear a day, his design then appears and a balance to bring together the movement of stone. Aching lawn, a bounding terrace, and a dining deck describe family vehicle in solid weather, while the house's French doors and large windows keep the garden visible from inside.



ILLUSTRATION: GUY LAWRENCE



LEFT: A lounge area with a brick deck and a wooden table and chairs. A bounding terrace and a dining deck describe family vehicle in solid weather, while the house's French doors and large windows keep the garden visible from inside.



LEFT: Ground covering Geranium blanda thrives in the shady sitting section. To add color, use the small flow backdrop to street, a large pot is filled with annual phloxes, begonias, and lilies.



the noosing steps and landings in history court and replacing the original dark brown concrete with colored, pebbled concrete that echoes the flagstone of his retaining wall and ties the garden more fully to the house.

3. Blur your lot's boundaries.

Keep far from your neighbors by freighting unnecessary side fences that call attention to your lot's limits. Thanks to his custom-built yard, Engle's level, perennially overgrown with a flood of juncos next door, hints that both belong to one landscape. The same trick works with trees, he says, as make sure the ones you plant don't block those visible on either property. As you look out beyond your own branches, especially if they resemble others nearby, they'll all seem part of the same expansive picture.

4. Carve out outdoor rooms.

Book up large outdoor spaces into smaller ones. Your garden feels bigger if you can't see all its "rooms" at once, as effect Engle's achieved through slight grade changes, walled recesses, and plant screens. The original backyard was mostly lawn with maple, birches, and spruce trees along the edges, and a crumpled wood deck. Over time, he replaced the deck with a raised one 8 feet larger and framed it with landscape-as-planters 2 feet higher than the garden below. These planters surround the dining area with close-up blooms and selectively block larger garden views with dwarf Albion spruces. He left a piece of lawn for his children, but at one end, between it and the kitchen door, he designed an outdoor lounge area, screened with another planter—this one 15 inches high and 12 feet long—filled with two-foot strawberry plants and fallowing colors and junipers.

5. Reclaim side yards.

The space on either side of your house is often seen merely as a utilitarian passage from front yard to backyard. It's hardly used and rarely occupied except as a dog run or a staging place for trash cans and bags of potting soil. So Engle too, it's an opportunity—for a private, meditative luncheon that helps you relax as you arrive from the noisy world of a personal garden. "People like to put paths down the middle of their



Plants and other side yards that screen the upper dining deck. Containers filled with flowers, shrubs, and plants, including the custom-made wooden planters, replace the lawn area near the deck and provide a private, meditative luncheon space for guests to enjoy.



a place to plant

When the Engles decided to build his potting shed, his side lot was large. "I wanted a place to store in air, overwater, break plants, close outdoor conditions, and sometimes during the winter, and of course, a place to put up plants." The mobile shed decided to complement his vintage cottage, and heat and electricity would make it useful down to well past dusk in any season. The checklist included floor and glass plant walls, with one handy feature that includes peg racks for garden tools, many to store garden-related materials and a side door open through side with a greenhouse front for filling watering cans and working up a few more (see right). Open shelves beneath working windows keep herbs to hand when the weather turns chilly and a handy step-out bin keeps potting soil at the ready (right). In the summer, the shed's garden benches allow a lot more than 10. Conveniently located off the dining deck, it also serves as a backup kitchen for entertaining.



yards, but there's a comfort to a paved path beside the house, planted with things you can step and look at but also presenting a long, dramatic glimpse of what's ahead. "Our friendships, if you let back onto an ally, as easy as Denz's of old friends do, make your path after journey. Since this could be your usual garden every once you've parked in the garage, even a view up the outer walls, add an ornamental gate, and such a fountain—a sort of welcome—just inside.

6. Accent with containers.

A small doon, lounging spots, and containers, big containers full of blooming annuals bring life and softness to paved places and let you study plants up close. They add color and draw attention to where you want it. Hagler's pair of impatiens, fuchsia, petunias, and begonias gather around his outdoor lounge, dining deck, and potting shed, as well as new doors and gates. "Be selective," he warns. "Containers require maintenance." Group pots for effect, and choose a color color, along with secondary, harmonizing hues. "With too many colors," he explains, "nothing is interesting; there's no statement."

7. Incorporate running water.

Use several fountains throughout the garden, especially at entry points and seating spots, to demarcate different areas with contrasting water spills and splashes and elements. Hagler's four range from a smooth granite sphere to a Japanese trough, with rocks that scatter water soundlessly or splash to make urban noise.

8. Plant for all seasons.

Though this won't literally enlarge your garden, it will expand your experience of it. Just as fountains contribute the dimensions of sound, the colors of maple leaves, dog bolls, and roses heighten our awareness of nature and the greater world we and our landscapes belong to. Hagler's garden puts on a show throughout the year, from spring crocuses and forget-me-nots to summer hydrangeas, daylilies, and phlox and on through early-fall Japanese maples and blooming, with blue in late November. Even in the dead of winter, the garden maintains its strong evergreen structure—mainly pines, boxwoods, and spruces—while the potting shed gives him a jump on starting new perennials in winter for the promise of spring ahead. ■



ABOVE: A midsize and a small fountain in a Japanese-style garden with a concrete trough fountain that adds trickling sounds to the scene. Below: Across the lawn is a granite sphere, backed with ferns and bushes, design the subtlest manner of water to the lounge area just outside the kitchen.



LEFT: Double gates and a central water feature mark the entry of the back alley. The garden with one of Hagler's seating spots throughout the landscape. A small granite sphere is placed to the otherwise linear design. A group of pots holding elegant, low-growing plants in a brick planter mark the arrival point. BELOW: Just inside the gate, a small, large leafed rosemary and ferns gather around a wall fountain that helps mute traffic noise from the back alley.



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Born, raised, homes
The towns and neighborhoods that made the old houses diverse range of house styles and sizes and, just as important, diverse communities of homeowners who work hard to keep each year's holidays alive.



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This Old House's 2012

Best Old-House Neighborhoods

If you haven't yet found your ideal place to live, never fear: We've done the work for you. From small, secluded hamlets to big, bustling cities, we've uncovered 61 vibrant neighborhoods from coast to coast where you'll find one-of-a-kind period houses—including bargains for DIYers willing to tackle a remodel. Here are just a few of our top spots

by Keith Pridemore

One of our favorites...



southern living
The Craftsman-style houses (AHSW) is just one of many architectural styles found here. Local families hit the block streets for the yearly Independence Day parade (9/24-11).



Old Northeast, St. Petersburg, Florida

THE NEIGHBORHOOD: Boasting an eclectic mix of traditional house styles, Old Northeast is set amid the kind of lush, tropical landscape that puts the Sunshine State on the map. Once farmland, the area was developed in 1903 as St. Petersburg's first neighborhood and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Outdoor spaces have its waterfront parks and miles of hiking and biking trails along the Tampa Bay and the Coffee Pot Bayou, while culture comes to life in concerts and art shows at the historic Pineda Theater, among other venues. There are plenty of shops and restaurants within walking distance, and events like the annual Easter egg hunt, Independence Day parade, and street closings for Halloween trick-or-treating attract throngs of local families.

THE HOUSES: Along the bay and the bayou are grand mansions built during Florida's land boom of the 1920s. More modest houses, interspersed with apartment build-

ings, populate the tree-lined, mid-block streets. Styles include Craftsman, Mediterranean Revival, and Italian Renaissance, with prices ranging from \$100,000 to \$400,000. **WHY BUY HERE?** The 2011 opening of the new Salvador Dali Museum and the restoration of the landmark 1925 Viny Hotel, where locals often stop to enjoy a cold beer on the veranda, have brought local and tourist dollars to the area. Many think the exposure will drive up interest—and property values—in this charming neighborhood.

...a snapshot of three others



Rose Park, Long Beach, California

City Craftsmen hang down and Spanish Revivalism surround an early modernist park in this long-pending Southern California neighborhood. It's close proximity to shops and restaurants in the popular Redondo Beach is drawing young artists, musicians, and other creative types.



Old Highland, Minneapolis, Minnesota

A small, tight-knit group of pioneering Old Highlanders restored many of the dilapidated Victorian-era houses in the up-and-coming enclave in North Minneapolis. But you can still get a fair upper Queens Area for around \$100,000, and you'll connect neighbors will be happy to share their renovation tips.



Ridgewood, Queens, New York

In this diverse community in western Queens, small family-friendly mansions dating from the 1920s to the 1940s and about half as what they would be in nearby Brooklyn's neighborhoods, such as Williamsburg and Greenpoint. Plus, it's a 30-minute subway ride into Manhattan.

Discover more about these places and all our 61 picks



Want to know more about these neighborhoods? We've got full descriptions and photos of everything that made the list—plus, we have each state's winners from the 2012 Best of Old House Awards. Read all about them at thisoldhouse.com/bestneighborhoods

PHOTO: JAMES A. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY; PHOTO: JAMES A. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO: JAMES A. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO: JAMES A. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

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questions

Q I found this antique at a garage sale. Its two arms spin around a spike. What was it used for?

—JOAN GUNN to how@pbs.org

A It's a garden string line spinner for planting vegetables. You dig a row, stick the spin in the end of a row, unspool any garden string, and feed it to a shilly-bush (a garden). Then you dig the string again. Any other one arm of the speed line.

Not exclusively for the use of a garden, this relic can also be used for planting a string of new lawns or laying out a new fence or building.

—JIM ELLIS

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM COOKS

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Our cast of veteran experts

TOM SILVA
General ContractorNORM ARONOFF
Master CarpenterEDWARD TREADWELL
Plumbing/Heating ExpertROBERT COOK
Landscape DesignerKEVIN CONNOR
Nail

The extension jams on my new windows stick out way beyond the surface of the wall. How am I supposed to install the window casing?

—MATTHEW LAMBERT VESTAL, MI



Tom Silva replies: These wood strips that pad out window joints far thicker walls need to be just about flush as, as you discovered, they'll interfere with the casings and keep them from lying flat.

If your extensions stick out less than 1/4 inch, simply pare them down. First, use a mallet to sink any nails below the surface, then use a sharp plane, as I'm doing at left, to shave off the excess wood.

But if the extensions protrude more than 1/4 inch—or if you have more than a couple of windows to fix—it will probably be quicker and easier to pull the strips off, rip each one to size on a table saw, and glue them back on the edges of the jambs using finishing nails.

NOISY WATER HEATER

After we take a shower or run the dishwasher, we hear lots of gurgling and peeping sounds from the tank of our 10-year-old gas-water heater. It sounds like it's making popcorn! What can we do to stop the noise?

—COOY TRESSOLD, THAWAN
APPLE VALLEY, MINN.

LEFT: When window jambs stick out less than 1/4 inch beyond the wall, Tom Silva shows them back with a plane so that the casing will lie flat.

Richard Tretlow replies: I'll bet you haven't drained your water heater in a while. Those peeping, rumbling sounds happen because minerals precipitate out of the water, sink down, and build up in layers, known as scale, at the bottom of the tank. Water trapped under the scale flashes to steam when the heater fires up, causing constant explosions.

The way to prevent all the cacophony is to drain and flush your water heater periodically to remove sediment before it has a chance to harden. How often you should do this depends on most cases on the hardness of your water. [The harder it is, the more minerals it has.] Manufacturers recommend flush as often as monthly. Realistically, though, once a year would help a lot. It'd certainly be much better than the flashing schedule some people follow, which is never.

But if you go through all this trouble and it's still noisy, that means the deposits can only be removed by having a plumber flush the tank with a de-liming acid. This is not a do-it-yourself job, and there's a good chance that the tank will leak afterward. Might be time to get a new one and to consider installing a water softener, which keeps the minerals from running into scale.

VINES ON A HOUSE

My husband and I are thinking about growing vines on our brick house to help it stay cool in the summer. Or would they be bad for the brick?

—ELIZABETH WILSON, LA GRANGEVILLE, MD.

Robert Cook replies: One of my very first jobs was pruning ivy away from the windows at Harvard University. Several years later, all the ivy was removed because of the

WHAT IS IT?



A Flange
window

B Lip
Lip for
to get in hook

C Ladder
hook

D Dr...

FOR THE ANSWER
SEE PAGE 93



To test if step 1 is still viable, give it a wig. If it flexes smoothly off the end of the stick and does properly when brushed out, it should be good to go.

damage it was doing to the brick and mortar. So take a tip from some pretty smart people and keep vines off your house. This advice applies no matter what kind of siding you have or what kind of tree it is.

If you still want the look of ivy, build a trellis, a pergola, or an arbor over the house for the vines to grow on. Keep this structure at least 18 inches from the brick to encourage air circulation and allow access for maintenance. On houses with wood siding, the support structure should be even further away to discourage mildew and provide room to paint.

As for ivy's supposed cooling effect, planning decisions made on the sunny side of the house is a much better idea. They'll provide shade in the summer and let in sunshine to warm the house in the winter. Just plant them far enough from the house so that roots and limbs won't cause problems as the trees mature.

Q WHEN IS PAINT TOO OLD?
How long can I keep a can of paint before it goes bad? I've been storing some for 10 years now.

—WILLIAM WELLS, BROOKVILLE, MD.

Kevin O'Connor replies: Most paint manufacturers say that the shelf life of unopened paint is about three years, so 10 years is a stretch.

Behind our men, Ann Steinhilber, technical services rep. at Behr Paints, recommends the six-step test: "Mix the paint thoroughly for five minutes," she says, "then dip a paint can stick into the can, lift it out, and watch how the paint flows off." If it flows evenly and looks creamy, it's okay to use. If it looks chunky or watery or crumbly, get rid of it. As John Lupo, product information specialist at Benjamin Moore, points out, "If a paint smells bad, the odor won't go away after you spread it on your walls."

But even if the paint looks and

until all night, Lape suggests leaving it on the same material you plan to coat, to make sure it sticks okay.

The best way to keep joints leaky, Lape says, is to maintain contact with air by sealing the can tightly after each use and transferring the paint to smaller containers whenever it can be half empty. And you'll thank yourself later if you label and date it.

Q REPAIR CAST IRON

I have a cast-iron drainage in my 1928 house that I have several rusty spots that leak slightly. I've tried fixing them with epoxy, aluminum duct-sealing tape, road cement, hot-melt glue, and silicone, all to no avail. What do you suggest?

—WILLIAM LOCKETT, DOWNE BROOKVILLE

Richard Trethewey replies: My kind of guy prevention. Unfortunately, no epoxy or goop can permanently repair rusty cast iron. The pipe is rotting from the inside out, so you can be sure that any drainage you set in iron works on the same material. The only long-term solution is replacement, with either new cast-iron or plastic piping—ABS or PVC—depending on what local codes call for. If you're lucky, you may have to replace only the downstream section, but I'd recommend having a plumber to do the work because cutting and joining cast-iron requires specialized skills and equipment.

send your questions to ask the oldhouse

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Include complete address and daytime phone number. National specialists will be asked for advice only and may be asked to visit your home. We cannot be held responsible for any damage or injury to property or persons.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

This driveway was about 14 inches deep, so we had to excavate it, then U.S.

I need to have my driveway redone. Is there a surface more environmentally friendly than asphalt or concrete?

—JIM MATTHEWS, MICRON, NJ

Troy Johnson of Outdoor Spaces replies: The best way to green up a driveway is to install permeable pavers, which allow water to drain down through the gaps between them and into a bed of crushed stone. From there, it seeps gently into the soil. Contrast that with a typical driveway, where water picks up oil

and other chemicals as it washes into the street, overloading storm drains, polluting waterways, and increasing the chance of flooding from runoff.

The pavers are made of brick, stone, or, like here, concrete, but they'll work only if laid over a properly installed base. For a job of this scale, hire a pro with permeable-paver experience; smaller projects, like a patio or porch, are fair game for DIYers. Either way, regular maintenance is a must. Plan on sweeping or vacuuming the joints at least once a year to prevent them from becoming clogged with leaves and debris and acting just like your old driveway.

Cost: \$2.50 to \$4.50 per square foot for pavers, \$10 to \$17 per square foot installed.
Time: Three days, unless you're doing it yourself. Hard. At this scale, it's not a DIY project.

STEP-BY-STEP

Permeable-paver driveway

1. Test the soil and excavate

First, call 811 for a no-dig round about. Check the soil to see how fast it absorbs water. (Contact your local Cooperative Extension office for details.) Remove the existing pavement and dig to a minimum depth of 15 inches unless the soil is less than 0.50 inches per hour. In that case, you may need a subsurface drainage pipe.

2. Prepare the base layers

Cover the excavation with a 6-inch layer of No. 2 1/2-inch washed crushed stone, which has sharp edges that lock together. (River gravel, with its rounded profile, is unacceptable.) Go over it twice with a plate compactor, series and lengthwise. Top with one 4-inch layer of No. 1 1/2-inch washed crushed stone and compact that twice, too.



4. Place the pavers

Starting at the lowest corner, set the pavers on the bedding layer, tight to the edge and one another. (Units on the sides of the pavers will automatically create the drainage gaps.) Check every 4 to 10 bricks to make sure the pavers are square to the level line. Place all the full-size pieces; then go back and cut pieces to fit in any gaps along the edges.

5. Fill the joints

Once the pavers are in, sprinkle 1/4-inch stone in the joints and drag it on the surface, and sweep it into the gaps with a wide push broom. Push the broom diagonally across the grid so that you don't dislodge any stones already in the joints.

6. Tamp

Sweep the surface clean, then run a plate compactor diagonally over the entire driveway. The machine's vibration packs the pavers firmly into the bedding layer and locks them in place. If the joints have settled slightly, fill and compact again. Now your driveway is open for business, rain or shine.

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Norm's tricks of the trade



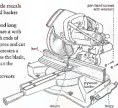
When I cut molding returns on my miter saw, the blade usually sends the return piece flying and ruins it. Is there a way to avoid this without losing my fingers?

—SCOTT NELSON, BUNSON, NJ

A The safest way to keep those little molding returns from flying is with a plywood backer that covers up the gap in the fence.

Start with a strip of 1/2-inch plywood long enough to cover the entire fence. Secure it with weather and pad-lock screws at both ends of the fence. Then set the blade at 9 degrees and cut completely through the backer. This creates a kerf, a small gap the same thickness as the blade, which indicates exactly where to place the molding before you make your cut.

Then when you do, the backer prevents the return from flying through the gap. Just remember to remove both backer pieces before making angled cuts.



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